Review of: "Mediumship for Pets: A Pilot Study With a Triple-Blind Protocol"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The paper titled "Mediumship for Pets: A Pilot Study With a Triple-Blind Protocol" presents an exploration into the possibility of contacting deceased pets through mediumship, using an experimental protocol similar to those used in human mediumship studies. Authored by Patrizio Tressoldi, Laura Liberale, and Fernando Sinesio, the study aims to address a neglected area: the survival of animal identity post-mortem.

The authors used a triple-blind protocol involving six expert mediums and twenty participants, each seeking contact with a deceased pet. The findings show that intended readings (those relating to the deceased pets of participants) yielded a higher percentage of correct information and global scores compared to control readings, though with limited statistical significance due to the small sample size. An 18% rate of direct interaction with the pets was observed, suggesting similarities with studies on human mediumship, despite noted limitations such as sample size and variability in medium and sitter experience.

This preliminary research opens an avenue for future studies on animal consciousness and mediumship, acknowledging the need for further investigation to validate these initial observations.

Major Comments to the Author

1. **Originality and Contribution**: The study addresses an underexplored area—the survival of animal identity post-mortem—and applies rigorous methods traditionally used in human mediumship research. This unique focus and use of a triple-blind protocol provide a valuable contribution to parapsychology and consciousness research. However, clarifying how the findings might advance knowledge in this domain or contribute to existing debates would strengthen the paper's significance.
2. **Methodological Rigor and Sample Size**: The implementation of a triple-blind protocol is a strength, as it helps control for biases that could influence the results. However, the small sample size (n=20) poses a limitation that impacts the statistical power and the generalizability of the findings. Future iterations could consider a larger sample size to enhance the reliability of the results and enable more robust statistical analyses. Acknowledging this limitation further in the discussion might make the results appear more transparent and encourage replication studies.
3. **Statistical Analyses**: The use of a Wilcoxon test and independent t-tests helps provide insight into the differences between intended and control readings. Nevertheless, the statistical significance was often marginal, likely due to the limited sample size. It might be beneficial to discuss other statistical methods or sample-size calculations that could be

applied in future studies to detect smaller effects with greater power. This would guide researchers who may wish to replicate or build upon your work.

4. **Interpretation of Findings**: While the study found that intended readings for pets yielded more accurate information than control readings, the implications of this for understanding animal consciousness after death could be further explored. The authors could expand on how the observed direct interactions with pets might suggest the continuation of animal consciousness and how this aligns (or contrasts) with findings from human mediumship studies. Providing a clearer link between these findings and the broader theoretical framework on consciousness and identity would add depth to the conclusions.
5. **Qualitative Analysis**: The qualitative analysis showed that 18% of correct information stemmed from direct interaction with pets. The study could benefit from further breakdowns or examples of such direct interactions to help readers understand the nature of these communications. Including a discussion on how these findings compare with existing literature on animal and human afterlife beliefs could enrich the narrative and provide a more comprehensive picture.
6. **Transparency and Data Sharing**: The availability of raw data on Figshare is commendable and aligns with open science principles. However, outlining in the manuscript how these data can be accessed and suggesting ways other researchers might use them for further analysis would enhance transparency. Additionally, considering a separate supplementary section with more detailed examples of correct versus incorrect readings could improve the clarity and credibility of the findings.

Minor Comments

1. **Abstract and Introduction**:
   - In the abstract, consider briefly summarizing the statistical significance of the results to give readers an immediate understanding of the study's outcomes.
   - In the introduction, add a sentence on how this study differs from or expands upon the limited previous research on animal mediumship.
2. **Literature Review**:
   - In discussing related studies, cite additional key studies on mediumship or afterlife beliefs where applicable. This would strengthen the context and relevance of the study.
   - Consider clarifying the differences between the protocol used in this study and other existing protocols on human mediumship for more clarity.
3. **Methods**:
   - The "Participants" section could benefit from an explanation of the rationale for including cats, dogs, and a squirrel in the study, especially if there were no predefined criteria for which animals could be included.
   - In the "Procedure" section, specify whether the mediums had prior experience with animals specifically or if they had only participated in human mediumship studies. This information would help readers assess the mediums' familiarity with animal interactions.

- In the description of the blinding protocol, consider including a brief summary of previous uses of triple-blind protocols in similar research to reinforce its validity.

4. **Statistical Analysis**:
   - Clearly define the significance threshold used in the analysis, as this is critical to interpreting p-values and statistical differences.
   - Consider including confidence intervals in the main text for key metrics, which would provide readers with a better understanding of the variability and precision of the results.
5. **Figures and Tables**:
   - Figures 1, 2, and 3 could benefit from additional labeling or legends for clarity, especially for readers who may not have a background in statistics.
   - Ensure that all figures and tables are referenced in the text in sequential order.
6. **Results**:
   - When describing statistical findings, ensure consistent terminology (e.g., “statistically significant” vs. “marginally significant”) to avoid confusion.
   - Consider rephrasing phrases like “low statistical power” in a more neutral tone (e.g., “limited statistical power due to sample size”).
7. **Discussion and Limitations**:
   - In the limitations, mention if there were any differences observed based on the types of animals studied, as this might inform future research on species-specific experiences.
   - Address the potential for individual medium variability and how it might have influenced the results, suggesting ways to control for this factor in future studies.
8. **References**:
   - Check that all references follow the journal’s formatting requirements for consistency.
   - Ensure that all in-text citations correspond to complete references in the bibliography, especially those from online open-access repositories.
9. **Language and Style**:
   - Review the manuscript for minor grammatical errors and awkward phrasings. For instance, replace “died of abdominal problems” with “passed due to abdominal complications” to improve readability.
   - Replace informal language, like “he/she shows me,” with more neutral terms to maintain a professional tone (e.g., “The medium reported observing…”).

10. **Data Accessibility**:
    - If feasible, include a direct link to the dataset in the methods section for easy access by readers, and describe how to locate the specific data relevant to each experiment.